DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 631 PS 016 488

AUTHOR Varner, Nancy J.
TITLE Increasing Environmental Awareness of Young Children through Meaningful Activities.
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 70p.; Practicum Report, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Concept Teaching; *Curriculum Development; *Home Study; *Kindergarten Children; *Parent Participation; Primary Education; Puppetry; Small Group Instruction

ABSTRACT

An environmental awareness program was implemented among kindergarten children with different backgrounds and abilities in order to expand their conceptual knowledge, communication skills, group participation, and self-expression. Participants were children scoring in the low instructional category of the Cooperative Preschool Inventory who also demonstrated little participation or self-expression in classroom activities. Intervention involved introduction of concepts by using puppets; expansion of concepts in game, story, or song; and demonstration of a follow-up home activity. Home follow-up by workshop-trained parents was considered a key element of the intervention. Intervention goals were (1) over 10 months all members of the target group would improve their grasp of concepts, communication skills, and observed behaviors; (2) at 5 months the group would demonstrate 40 percent positive improvement in group participation and self-expression and after 10 months a 75 percent improvement; (3) after 10 months 75 percent of the participating parents would be involved in the program; and (4) after 10 months teachers would indicate whether the program was effective and should be incorporated into the kindergarten program. Findings indicated that all performance standards were attained. Appendices provide related materials, such as the teacher survey of children, samples of home activity cards, and a parent survey. (RH)

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Center for the
Advancement of Education
Ed.D. Program

INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS OF YOUNG CHILDREN THROUGH MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

BY
Nancy Varner

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INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS OF YOUNG CHILDREN THROUGH MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

by

Nancy J. Varner
Cluster 16

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty
of the Center of the Advancement
of Education of Nova University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Educational Doctorate
in Early Childhood

July 1986

PS 016486

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Rosemary Perkins
Name

Elementary Counselor
Title

7955 SW 152 St., Miami 33157
Address

June 15, 1986
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Nancy J. Varner under the direction of the reviewer listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Early Childhood at Nova University.

Approved:

August 24, 1986
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D.
(Type Name and Degree, Reviewer)

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I gave this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn a similar respect.

Nancy J. Varner

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Environmental Awareness of Young Children Through Meaningful Activities. Varner, Nancy J., 1986: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood.
Descriptors: Early Childhood Education / Kindergarten Children / Learning Activities / Environmental Awareness / Environmental Influences / Parent Attitudes / Play / Cognitive Development / Self-concept / Thinking Skills.

This report addressed the problem that limited background experiences or culturally different experiences hindered environmental awareness of some kindergarten children, thus restricting cognitive thinking skills. In reviewing the literature the writer found that when adults are involved in encouraging the development and acceptance of the child then the child grows in self-esteem and cognitive growth. Therefore parents and teachers should focus on the same goals to gain the greatest effects.

The writer's goals were: (1) to improve the target group in initial concepts, communication skills and observed behaviors; (2) to improve the target group in group participation and self-expression; (3) to have parents demonstrate their involvement; (4) to effectively involve teachers on grade level with concepts. In addressing these goals, the writer implemented a solution to coordinate efforts of adults working with children to expand their thinking skills. First, concepts were introduced at school in a small group, then activity cards were designed for adults to expose children to these concepts through everyday life settings. These meaningful interactions would stimulate oral exchange of ideas.

The findings indicate that all standards of performance were reached by conclusion of the practicum. Parents and teachers were working toward the same goals and the children were gaining in skills and participating more in class. Since the results of this practicum were in a positive nature, this model can be recommended to similar situations. (Appendices include teacher survey of child, workshop letter and agenda, parent letters, samples of "Home Activity Card", parent survey.)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

Urbanization and a favorable climate enticed migration from other parts of the country; and a sporadic but constant influx of immigration from Cuba, Haiti and South American countries made this setting a part of the nation's fourth largest public school system. The elementary school represented families from three adjacent communities composed of white, black and Hispanic backgrounds. Business and professional people made up the nucleus of the stable communities with socio-economic status from low to upper middle class.

The school was located in a predominately white neighborhood. The attendance files indicated that 60% of the students came from this area. A small percentage were transported into the school's population from an adjacent black community as a result of the federal court desegregation ruling. Significant to the socio-economic status was that 40% of the students from this neighborhood were on the federally funded food program as a result of low family incomes.

These surrounding identified areas offered many opportunities for children, such as, large shopping centers, many attractions of educational value, public library, recreational facilities and public beaches. The school's campus was adjacent to a county park which provided numerous organized children's programs. An after school child-care program used the park facilities to provide some help for working parents.

Description of School

The target school placed emphasis on basic skills instruction by using a diagnostic prescriptive approach to learning. The Primary Education Program (PREP) provided early intervention which screened and determined the needs and instructional levels of beginning students. The goals were to identify potential learning problems and to meet individual needs by providing effective activities. This program facilitated the student's progression from kindergarten through fifth grade. Since this school had mostly self-contained classrooms with some cross-groupings at grade levels, articulation and data gathering through ongoing assessments were means of conveying progress to the next level.

A recent concern of declining white enrollment spearheaded a public relations campaign to present the benefits of public education to the community and to

introduce parents of children attending private schools to the public education system. This positive image of the school leveled the population decline and the attendance secretary reported that 780 students were enrolled in the spring of 1985. This was approximately the same number enrolled the previous year and the ethnic composition remained stable.

The faculty encouraged involvement of parents and community organizations. An active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School Advisory Committee enriched the school life of students in various ways. Volunteers shared their skills, helped individual students or did clerical work to provide teachers with more instructional or planning time. Involvement provided opportunities for parents to learn about the educational programs and to interact with children. A major concern of the staff was the limited black parental involvement in the mentioned programs.

Writer's Responsibilities

The writer of this practicum was a teacher of kindergarten children. Since many cut-backs in programs had affected the kindergarten curriculum, all instruction and assessment was provided by the classroom teacher. Support from other specialists was available when deemed

necessary but organization and recommendations for movement in instructional strategies was the responsibility of the writer.

Since these kindergarten students represented varied backgrounds, a wide range of readiness abilities and experiences was evident. There were average middle-class students, racially isolated students who were put into a new situation, and those who came from families where English was not the home language. These groups were further divided. Some children had no preschool experience and some had several years. Some had working parents and went to day-care centers, baby sitters, relatives or empty homes after school. Some rode the bus and were out of their neighborhood environment. Some had involved parents or working single-parent or no parents. The writer considered these individual differences and provided a learning environment to accommodate the various levels of abilities and experiences.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Beginning kindergarten children enter school with varied experiences and readiness abilities. Some do not understand simple concepts, have difficulty expressing self, cannot describe simple objects or become confused with pictured and oral word meanings. Deutsch (1963) found that when the home role-models do not stimulate the child, the child will ask fewer questions, use shorter sentences, use a limited vocabulary and display a shorter attention span when trying to accomplish school tasks. This indicates that role-models and meaningful-experiences are developmentally significant at this early age.

White (1975) states that problems of the disadvantaged can be eliminated or that all children can be stimulated to attain high levels of cognitive development if given optimal environments in the early years. Bloom (1964) suggests that the first six years or so of life are crucially important, perhaps even constituting a critical period for intellectual development. It is obvious that many children are being raised in ways that do not optimally stimulate their development.

Dialectical or bilingual languages can impede readiness progress and communication skills of some young children. These children come from culturally different backgrounds and their experiences and dialects hinder school progress. They are expected to function in a classroom situation where standard English is the language of success but a different language or dialect is spoken in the home.

As a result of limited developmental stimulation and restricted communication skills, young children are faced with undue frustrations and difficulty in trying to meet their goals. The belief that they are inadequate and incompetent may come from what they feel or hear about themselves from adults or peers. This lack of self-confidence hinders their social and cognitive growth.

Briefly stated, the problem was that limited background experiences or culturally different experiences hindered meaningful environmental awareness of kindergarten children, thus restricting cognitive thinking skills.

Problem Documentation

Each child was individually administered the Cooperative Preschool Inventory (CPI) at the beginning of the school year. This was a norm-referenced type of test

which assessed the child on body awareness, auditory direc-itons, environment, quantitative perceptions, visual perceptions and motor skills. This test identified the child's early experiences and provided a guideline for placement in one of three possible instructional strategies.

Scores from previous years indicated that approximately 20% of the total kindergarten population would score in the low instructional strategy. Since the population was stable, then twenty students from the total kindergarten program were in the target group of low-scores. These low scores indicated a lack of experience appropriate to test requirements or that the children did not comprehend or understand the language of the test. These were students who could have actual or potential learning problems in cognitive thinking and communication skills.

Since these students demonstrated limited environmental awareness and restricted communication skills, the inability to express self and to compete with other students occurred. This lack of self-confidence could develop and hinder social and cognitive growth. Teachers documented the target group's initial interactions with a survey (Appendix A) to assess each child's participation and self-expression in a group situation.

An information form (Appendix B) gave the following results about the target group's background;

1. The ethnic background of the group consisted of six black, seven white and seven Hispanic students.
2. Spanish was the only language spoken in three homes.
3. The black students were transported to school from a black neighborhood.
4. Grandparents were members of four households.
5. Twelve children had both parents working.
6. Four children lived with only one parent.
7. Eight children participated in the federally funded food program at school.
8. After school four children went home to their mothers, eight went to relatives or neighbors and eight went to an after school program until working parents picked them up.
9. All members had at least one brother or sister and three children were the most in a family.
10. All members had some type of preschool or childcare experience.

The results were acquired from teachers or in parent conferences. This information gave an indication of how the problem was magnified or nurtured.

Causative Analysis

Before a child enters school, the home environment should offer stimulating activities to stretch the thinking process and to respond to overtures. Brazelton (1984) recognizes the family as a system in which parents and children reciprocally influence one another. Parents should develop expertise in providing an environment in which children can unfold. If a parent does not understand or is indifferent to a child's developmental environment, then the child's verbal interaction and thinking skills will be limited.

Problems in present day society influence the identified communities. Pressures, anxieties or frustrations caused by low-income, working-mothers, single-parent homes and teenage-parents create a situation in which children can be unintentionally ignored. Chances to develop the thinking process or opportunities to talk can be lessened if the hurried or preoccupied parent does not respond or give feedback to the child. Inadequate home conversations, as short responses or redirections to the television for companionship, give the child little need or desire to express ideas or ask questions. Inhibition of thought and verbal interactions can result in language deficiencies on the part of the child.

The Piagetian concept of learning is that it is personal and continuous. Although children may share many concepts, no two children understand these concepts in exactly the same way. Therefore, new learnings must be built upon existing foundations. Cultural differences which present dialectical or language that is different from school-language can impede readiness and communication progress. These children will need to hear and to use acceptable school language in order to succeed.

The Related Literature

There are various resources in the professional literature related to limited background or culturally different experiences in relationship to environmental awareness and thinking skills of young children. Bradbard and Endsley (1980) state that low self-concepts can prevent children from exhibiting curiosity and this can create problems in meeting the demands of school. These children may anticipate failure, may lack information seeking skills or may not be provided with stimulating activities in out of school situations.

Peterson and Roscoe (1983) recognize that neglected children outnumber physically battered children by four to one in the United States. While it is not the most conspicuous form of child maltreatment, it is equally

detrimental. Neglect occurs when parental indifferences at home fail to meet the child's basic needs. Characteristics which hinder socially acceptable behaviors and environmental awareness can be noted. Feelings of little self-worth and low self-concepts hinder ability to develop age-appropriate relationships with peers or adults. Models of acceptable social roles are not presented in the home and children are not aware of what most society deems as "normal" life experiences. The writers conclude that teachers can provide opportunities of involvement with activities designed to enhance knowledge of self, personal expression and development of environmental awareness but cannot completely eradicate the effects.

Daugherty (1985) reports that one baby out of five in a large Florida county is born to a teen-age mother. Nearly half are not married and those who are married are three times more likely to end in separation or divorce. The young parent's inability to cope with pressure of child-rearing increases the risk of abused or neglected children, and indications are that children of teenage-parents tend to have lower IQ and achievement scores in school.

Walberg (1984) states that a syntheses of 2,575 empirical studies of academic learning shows that parents directly or indirectly influence the chief determinants of

a student's cognitive, affective and behavioral learning. Data is given to demonstrate that both home conditions that are conducive to learning and the relationship of the home to the school have deteriorated for several decades. Limited amount of time that families invest in their children, disappearance of nuclear family, divorce, working-mother and public welfare that encourages large single-parent families are some contributing factors. Programs that target parent/teacher cooperation which focus on specific achievement goals demonstrate the greatest learning effects since learning environment of the home is improved.

Desforges (1981) stresses that educators should understand the views of Piaget on child development and be able to apply them in the classroom setting. The understanding of children's difficulties with specific skills can be noted and tasks can be matched to maximize the learning process.

Bradley and Caldwell (1984) suggest that a degree of fluidity exists in the relationship between the infant's social environment and subsequent academic performance. Data from 37 normal first-grade children and their families were used in the study. Correlational analyses were performed to determine the relation between early environmental and achievement scores and performance at

the end of first grade. The findings indicated that maternal responsivity, which is necessary for early cognitive growth, was not significantly correlated with first-grade achievement test scores, but mother's acceptance of child and involvement in encouraging the development of child did correlate. The most notable finding reveals that providing the appropriate stimulating play materials was associated with first grade achievement. Concrete learning experiences help develop knowledge and concepts to children in sensorimotor and preoperational levels of thinking. Toys serve as a vehicle to facilitate learning from parents when parents play and instruct children. Toys can also serve to facilitate learning via modeling and instruction from older siblings.

Asayesh (1984) reveals that since 1979 the state of California has required each school district to provide "black language projects". These programs provide special training for nonstandard English as part of the regular school curriculum. Oral drills built around expressions common to "black English", such as the use of "et" rather than "ate" are used. Oglesby (1984) recognizes that standard English is the language of success in school and business and "Black English" is a dialect that hinders school progress. Implications are that young people should be taught at home and at school the language that

must be learned to achieve even a modicum of success.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The writer anticipated that the intervention of an environmental awareness program would expand the thinking skills of the target group. Members of the group scored low on the CPI and demonstrated little participation or self-expression in classroom activities but this did not identify them as learning disabled. Lack of varied experiences, readiness preparation or home-role models to stimulate could have influenced their responses. Therefore, with the involvement of teachers and parents working toward the same goals it was hoped that this group would improve in academic growth and self-esteem. Hopefully, the parents would indicate an interest and become aware of how to interact in a meaningful way with children. Also, the teachers would indicate that members of the group were beginning to talk and express themselves, to be aware of their surroundings and to interact with others.

Behavioral Expectations

Since the practicum was implemented at the beginning of the kindergarten year, it was important to consider the children's transition to a full-day instructional program

of academic and social growth. The target group was identified from four kindergarten classes as children who scored low on initial concepts and communication skills and who demonstrated limited group participation and self-expression.

The following goals were projected for this practicum:

1. Over a period of ten months all members of target group will improve in grasp of initial concepts, communication skills and observed behaviors. At least 80% of the target group will indicate an 80% improvement. The results will be measured by a pre-test and post-test of two sub-tests from Developmental Indicators of Assessment of Learning (DIAL).

2. By mid-point the target group will demonstrate 40% positive improvement in group participation and self-expression and over a period of ten months there will be a 75% positive improvement noted. The results will be measured by teacher surveys before, at mid-point and at the conclusion of the practicum.

3. Over a period of ten months 75% of the parents will demonstrate involvement in the environmental awareness program by returning 50% of the weekly activity card folders.

4. After ten months of implementation teachers will indicate that the program was effective and should be incorporated into the kindergarten program. The results will be measured by a writer designed questionnaire in which 80% positive results will indicate success.

Evaluation Instruments

Observation, participation and performance were to demonstrate the effectiveness of the practicum. Initial cognitive and behavioral results were to be measured by DIAL. Function of the standardized screening test was to identify children in need of follow-up services in areas found in Table 1. Skills not mastered were to be re-evaluated at the conclusion of practicum implementation to measure growth.

Since child participation in a classroom situation was a necessary component, feedback from all teachers involved was to be recorded by written surveys three times during implementation period. Positive results were to be recorded in percentiles to demonstrate growth in group participation and self-expression. If standards of performance were not reached at mid-point, a conference with teachers to discuss desired attitudes and skills to be encouraged was to be planned so all the target group members would be working toward the same goal.

Activity cards were to be sent home weekly. Parents would sign and return folders to indicate involvement. Charting the returned folders would indicate when a need to contact parents occurred. Mid-point a letter was to be sent home to further document involvement. A final survey was to be sent at the conclusion of implementation

TABLE 1

Observations Measured by DIAL

Concepts	Communication	Behavior
sorting blocks	articulation	inability to separate from adult
naming colors	short-term memory	clumsy
counting	expressive/receptive use of nouns and verbs	squints
positioning	problem solving	cries
following directions	self-identification	does not talk
identifying concepts	classification	perseverative
identifying body parts	story telling performance	distractable
		hyperactive
		resistive
		disruptive
		lethargic
		impulsive

to obtain the parent's reactions to the program.

Constant communication with participating teachers would provide a verbal on-going type of evaluation. Their input and ideas would aid in planning and identifying specific concepts. A final teacher questionnaire was to be designed by the writer to receive indications of the program's effectiveness from an educator's point of view.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The writer recognized that home influences, environmental exposures and language skills affect the child's cognitive and affective development. Families are not self-sufficient but need the support of society in developing a wholly new attitude toward children. Umansky (1984) believes the form or make-up of the family is not nearly so important as the values adults place on childhood and the development of children into responsible adults.

Daugherty (1985) and Oglesby (1984) recognize that educating parents or adults in problem-areas that hinder the child's development is needed. Walberg (1984) states that when the parents and teachers cooperate and focus on a program which has specific achievement goals, then the greatest learning takes place.

Children need to feel industrious rather than inferior. Adult reactions to a child can help to reinforce a concept. Ross and Killey (1977) state that when children ask their own questions, they are more attentive and receptive to information that stems from their own

curiosity. Adults can use manipulatives to provide opportunities for the child to hear and to learn problem-solving skills. Then access of children to these manipulative objects can maximize their question-asking ability. Bradley and Caldwell (1984) indicate in their study that children using developmentally stimulating toys and games can improve their cognitive development.

Peterson and Roscoe (1983) state that even though educators cannot eliminate the effects of neglect, they can provide encouragement and guidance to build a better self-concept. This means praise and recognition for correct behaviors. Also a balance between novelty and familiarity will optimize a child's curiosity to be drawn into a group situation to initiate interactions and relationships independently.

Indications from the literature signify that initial learning of young children can be stimulating or limiting in its development. There has been a significant shift in the function of the family. Families are deeply influenced by broad and social economic forces over which they appear to have little control. Positive strengths and attitudinal changes can guide these parents. Hopefully, late starts in young children are not lost starts.

Description of Selected Solutions

In selecting a solution strategy from the various alternatives the writer anticipated that the target group would demonstrate limited or culturally different experiences in environmental concepts and a limited ability to communicate the experiences. A solution to coordinate efforts of adults working with children to expand their thinking skills was chosen. Activities would expose the children to kindergarten concepts through everyday life settings and meaningful interactions would stimulate oral exchange of ideas.

The writer realized that frequent consultations with other kindergarten teachers concerning concepts to be introduced were necessary in providing a continuity of learning. The identified concepts would be used in classroom activities after they were introduced to the target group in a small group setting.

The writer recognized that cognitive learning is important but affective learning is equally important. A small group approach permitted the students to interact and express themselves without the more self-confident students speaking first. A special time each week would be selected to introduce the concept. Stimulating and enjoyable activities would be planned to meet the needs

of the group and to encourage language and self-expression in expanding the concept.

The writer considered including the family as part of the team to stimulate the learning of the target group. A follow-up activity card would be sent home each week to bring the family into the school program as active participants. The activities would be meaningful and pleasant experiences for children and parents since they would be designed to use household items and the children's environment to encourage language development and thinking skills. Parental involvement would necessitate a workshop to inform and instruct parents in techniques of how to stimulate and interact with children. Thus, stimulating activities in out of school situations would improve the learning environment of the home.

Report of Action Taken

First Month Procedures

The first important task was to discuss with the participating staff members the type of student needed in organizing the program and to explain the operational procedures which would follow. Since this program was to involve members from the total kindergarten program, commitment to release these students and to follow

through with suggested concepts and evaluations was necessary.

Next the target group had to be identified by using students who scored low on the CPI and by teacher recommendation. Since teachers had been interacting with students for several weeks, they could identify those in need of special attention in environmental awareness and participation. Then a parental letter of permission to participate in the program and notification of a parent workshop were sent home (Appendix C).

When permission to participate was granted, the initial data had to be gathered to document growth. First the DIAL sub-tests were administered to identified students to evaluate skills of concepts, communication and behavioral observations. The instrument documented areas of weakness and provided a comparison for improvement, but it was lengthy to administer. Next the initial teacher surveys of identified children's participation and self-expression in a large group were recorded. This would provide a base to measure the results of the intervention program.

Second Month Procedures

Once the group was identified and evidence of abilities recorded, it was time to focus on specific concepts and activities to implement the program. A

decision to meet once a month with participating teachers was arranged. Grade level planning sessions seemed appropriate since concepts could be incorporated into lesson plans. Also it was a means of informally evaluating and discussing individual progress.

Since parents were to be instrumental in follow-up activities, a workshop was provided to inform and instruct. A welcoming letter and agenda (Appendix D) guided the parents in participation. Child participants were used as models for the demonstration. The first major difficulty was encountered when only six parents attended the workshop. Working parents created the problem, therefore, individual conferences had to be planned either by telephone or times convenient to parents. This was time consuming but parental understanding of the program was significant.

At the end of the second month the implementation of the program began. Arrangements for the writer's non-target members presented another problem. Exchange of supervision time or use of school-aides provided the solution. Regularity with the schedule was essential because anticipation created enthusiasm. Punctuality of students coming from other classrooms was also necessary for maximum interaction in the short sessions. To enhance the twenty minute period a set routine was established.

The following format was used for each concept presented:

1. A puppet introduced the concept.
2. Game, story or song was used to expand the concept.
3. An activity that was to be sent home was demonstrated.

Then the activity card was sent home to help guide the parent and to be filed for future use. The folder with an attached form (Appendix E) was returned to school to indicate participation.

Home Activity Cards (Appendix F) were a culmination of teachers' feedback and classroom observations. The following tasks had to be accomplished each month:

1. Identify concept.
2. Find or invent activities for each concept.
3. Illustrate concept cards by using fingerprint characters.
4. Type activities.
5. Paste on file cards.
6. Laminate for durability.
7. Send home cards in folders.
8. Record signed folders returned.

Several suggestions are noted to aid the program. Monthly

preparation of activities facilitate an uninterrupted program. Recording and placing new cards in folders before each session prevents the loss of valuable time in group sessions.

Fourth Month Procedure

Since all parents were not returning folders, a letter (Appendix G) went home to stress cooperation. Ten parents responded and folder returns increased.

Fifth Month Procedure

The second teacher survey of children's participation and self-expression was recorded. Parents' return of signed folders was recorded to indicate participation.

Eighth Month Procedure

An incentive was offered to children if they would encourage parents to consistently return signed folders.

Tenth Month Procedures

Since this was the last month of implementation, the following data had to be gathered to record the outcome:

1. third teacher survey of children's participation and self-expression
2. final count of signed folders
3. evaluation of concepts from DIAL sub-tests
4. letter and survey to parents
5. teacher's evaluation of program

The results will be discussed but there was a definite interest displayed by children and parents with the activities that had been sent home each week.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Cognitive and behavioral growth

The target group as a result of small group participation, as well as parent and teacher awareness, demonstrated improvement in mastery of concepts, communications and observed behaviors. In the stated objectives the writer had projected that the outcome would be successful if all students would demonstrate improvement and 80% of the target group would score 80% on each post-test. As seen in Table 2 the target group increased their skills by scoring above 80% on each post-test.

TABLE 2

Performance of Cognitive Growth (N=20)

	No. Correct (max.=140)	% correct
Pre-test		
concepts	98	70
communication	84	60
Post-test		
concepts	140	100
communication	126	90

All children demonstrated growth on each post-test as compared to each pre-test. Further results are that eight negative behavioral observations were noted during the pre-test of the target group, whereas, during the post-test only two observed negative behaviors occurred. This indicates a growth in positive behavioral observations.

Participation and self-expression growth

Since the target group needed to improve in large group participation and self-expression, a homeroom teacher survey was completed before, at mid-point and at the conclusion of the practicum. The desired result was to have a 40% positive improvement by mid-point and a 75% positive improvement at the conclusion as compared to the initial survey. As can be observed in Table 3, the overall results were successful.

Parental involvement

The involvement of the parents was noted by the number of signed folders that were returned to school. Success would be achieved if 75% of the parents returned 50% of the folders. Table 4 illustrates what happened during the twenty-seven weeks.

TABLE 3

Teacher's Survey of Children
(N=20)

Positive Responses in Language Participation

Survey	Total (160)	Mean	%
1	24	3	15
2	73	9.1	45.5
3	120	15	75

Positive Responses in Social and Environmental Self-expression

Survey	Total (200)	Mean	&
1	39	3.9	19.5
2	106	10.6	53
3	159	15.9	79.5

TABLE 4

Parent Involvement
(N=20)

Total Folders Returned (N=180)			Parents on Task (N=20)	
Week	N	%	Parents	%
9	94	52	10	50
18	120	66 2/3	12	60
27	151	83 1/3	15	75

After the ninth week a letter was sent home to encourage involvement and an increase in returns can be noted. After the eighteenth week an incentive was offered to the children if the folders were returned. As can be noted this brought the projected outcome to a successful conclusion.

Teachers evaluation of program

A positive rating (Appendix J) was given by the teachers to the value of the awareness program. A continuation in succeeding years was recommended even though an uncertain rating was given to parental awareness and understanding of the activities. This is an indication that teacher/parent communications should increase throughout the kindergarten program.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that all standards of performance were reached by the conclusion of the practicum. The parents and teachers were working toward the same goals and the children were gaining in skills and self-esteem.

The activity cards gave the parents an opportunity of being role models in the repetition of concepts taught in school. This reinforcement of meaningful

learning experiences had a positive influence on how children and parents interacted in the home. The parents' positive reactions to the program can be seen in the results of a parent survey (Appendix K). They indicated that the activities were enjoyed together and could be used again for fun and learning.

Positive side effects were that ten of the children moved up in instructional strategies when tested. Only two will be retained in kindergarten but their parents indicated that the children enjoyed the extra parental attention. The activities also provide them with different ways of working with their children.

Recommendations

The skills introduced offer a sequential order of activities, which start with the simple and extend to the more difficult. The activities span the kindergarten year and can be helpful and useful in guiding teachers as the year progresses.

The activity cards can be used with the entire class as a follow-up of concepts learned in school. The ideas entice all parents to be involved with meaningful and pleasant experiences outside of the classroom.

Newsletters or workshops are a means of communication to extend the program so parents become enthusiastic participants with their children. In so doing they provide good role models who stimulate the children's development.

Learning centers present another way of using the activities. An adult aide working with a small group of children enhances the exchange of ideas and oral expression. In so doing the children's concepts are developed and communication skills are encouraged.

Dissemination

The positive results in the report indicate that all students could benefit by the plan of action. If the home and school would share and cooperate in the development of the child, then each child will grow to his or her potential. By submitting the report for publication in an educational journal, the solution strategy will be presented to other educators.

The writer also recognizes the importance of repetition in children's learning and the importance of adults as good role models. The report documents that parents become meaningfully involved with their children if they are provided guidance and appropriate

activities. Presentations to parent groups should recognize the outcomes and hopefully parents will understand the relationship of the home's positive influences and the child's success in school.

The writer will encourage the use of play or games by adults to entice young children into the mainstream of learning. Pleasant experiences lead to alternative ways of developing concepts which increase awareness and communication skills; therefore, educational significance will be the result if the information learned is applied to other situations.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY OF CHILD

Name_____

Answer each statement with a yes or no.

Language Participation

	1	2	3
1. Uses complete sentences.			
2. Recalls an experience.			
3. Shows sequence of events.			
4. Converses with peers.			
5. Participates in discussions.			
6. Speaks Standard English in class.			
7. Speaks Standard English at home.			
8. Communicates with teacher.			

Social and Environmental Self-expression

1. Listens.			
2. Expresses interest in school.			
3. Demonstrates curiosity.			
4. Displays broad experiences.			
5. Works easily with others.			
6. Assumes responsibility.			
7. Appears generally happy and cheerful.			
8. Completes task.			
9. Waits turn.			
10. Cooperates with teacher.			

APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND HISTORY

1. Name
2. Classroom
3. Ethnic background of child
4. Language spoken in home
5. Number of adults in the home
6. Preschool or child care experience
7. Number of adults working
8. Number of children in the home

   older_____

   younger_____
9. Federally funded lunch - yes no
10. After school care of child

    home_____

    after school program_____

    name other_____

APPENDIX C

PARENTAL LETTER OF PROGRAM AND WORKSHOP

September 25, 1985

Dear Parents,

One of my requirements as a candidate for a Doctorate Degree in Early Childhood at Nova University is to contribute to the educational process of our children. I am planning a pilot program in thinking skills. If the program proves to be of educational value, other beginning school children will benefit.

You and your child have been selected to participate in this program. On Wednesday, October 2 at 2:30 PM I will be sharing information and activities at a workshop orientation in the kindergarten building.

Please sign below if you and your child will participate in the program. If you cannot attend the workshop, I will contact you.

Sincerely,

Nancy Varner

My child and I will participate and we will attend the workshop.

_____

We cannot attend the workshop, but we would like to participate.

_____

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP LETTER AND AGENDA

THINKING SKILLS WORKSHOP

Welcome:

Research suggests that the first six years or so of life are crucially important for intellectual development. Further indications are that when parents and teachers focus on specific achievement goals then the children demonstrate greater learning in school.

This program is designed to encourage your child to think and to develop self-expression. Each Monday a fun period of group participation using puppets, songs, games and stories will introduce a learning concept. Then an activity card will be sent home to reinforce this concept and to guide you in developing your child's thinking skills. These simple and fun activities can be done while you are working, traveling in the car, shopping at the store or visiting a place of enjoyment. You will keep the activity card at home to file for future use but return the folder on Friday to indicate involvement and to receive another activity card.

Hopefully, this program will encourage children to talk and express themselves, to be aware of their surroundings and to have fun with adults. As a result, your child will grow in self-confidence while learning and playing.

Thank you for your participation,

Nancy Varner

AGENDA

I. Program
   A. Description
   B. School's part
   C. Home's part

II. Parent Responsibilities
   A. Role modeling (child imitates)
   B. Interaction
      1. Encourage child to talk
      2. Encourage child to ask questions
   C. Repetition of activities (change samples and repeat often)

III. Demonstration of Activity

IV. Questions or Discussion

APPENDIX E

FORM ON ACTIVITY CARD FOLDER

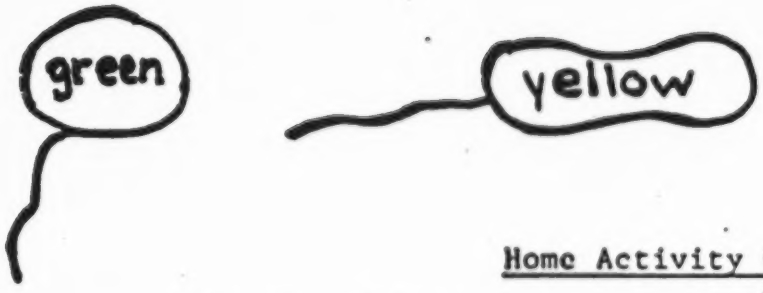
48

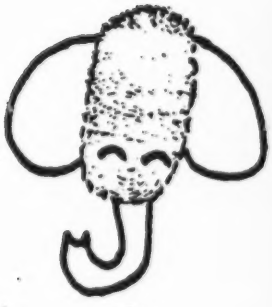
Sign by the activity number to indicate concept was reinforced at home. Return this folder to school by Friday.

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26
	27

APPENDIX F

HOME ACTIVITY CARDS





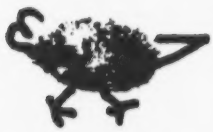
Home Activity Card 1

Concept: Colors

Activity 1: Play "I can see something (color word) ".
Child tries to guess object.
Good game to play in the car or for a quiet time at home.

Activity 2: Ask your child to find something by its color.

Examples: Find the blue box of cookies.
Find the purple flower in the picture.
Find the orange ball of gum.
Can play this game while shopping or at home.



Home Activity Card 2

Concept: Telling Stories in Sequence

Activity 1: Watch a T.V. program with your child. Name two events in program. Ask child - What happened 1st? What happened last?

Activity 2: Tell or read your child a story. Ask such leading questions as-

- How did the story begin?
- What happened next?
- Then what happened?
- How did the story end?

Activity 3: Use a comic strip from the newspaper. Tell story to child. Cut apart and see if child can retell story and put pictures in correct order.

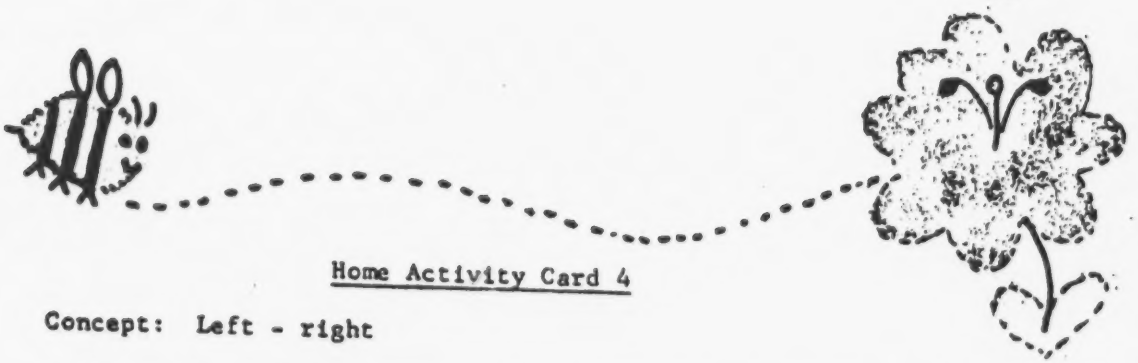
Home Activity Card 3

Concept: Helpers in the community

Activity 1: As you drive in the car, walk through the neighborhood or shop in the mall, ask your child to name the occupations of people you see. Examples: sales clerk, mailman, truck driver

Activity 2: Discuss the occupations that members of the family have and how their jobs help other people.

Activity 3: Describe a type of work to your child and ask him/her to name the occupation of the people who do this work. Example: This man checks your teeth (Dentist). Then see if your child can provide some job descriptions and you guess their occupations.



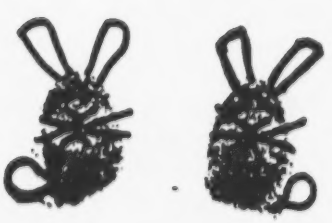
Home Activity Card 4

Concept: Left - right

Activity 1: March to music or beat time to music with hands and call out "left,right, left, right" as corresponding foot or hand hits the surface.

Activity 2: Have child set the table each night this week. Put the knife and spoon on right and the fork on the left. Emphasize the positions.

Activity 3: While you are shopping in a store, name an object on the left (as bread) and an object on the right (as potatoes). Ask: "What other foods are on the left?" Continue as you go through the store. This game can be played as you drive in the car.



Home Activity Card 5

Concept: More than - less than

Activity 1: Observe in the neighborhood. Are there more or less cars, people, trees, houses etc. on this side of the street or that side.

Activity 2: Arrange groups of objects (buttons, forks, books, socks etc.) on table to see if your child can determine which group has more and which group has less. After child selects, then count to confirm his/her choice. Then have child make another group that is one more or one less.

Activity 3: Place a rubber band around jars or glasses at various heights. Have child fill container to rubber bands with water, sand, rice etc. Then arrange containers in order by starting with less and progressing to more.

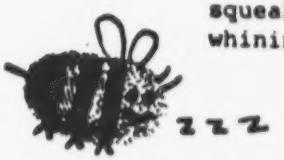
Home Activity Card 6

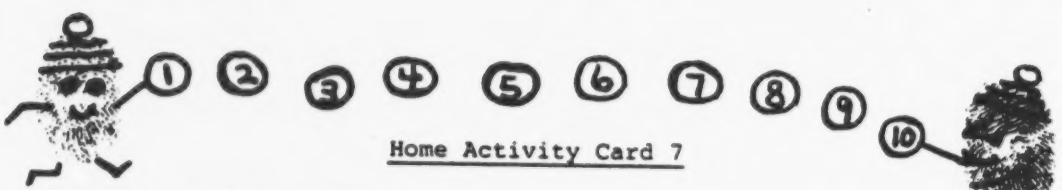
Concept: Sounds in the Environment

Activity 1: Hide a small toy and see if child can find it. Clap hands loudly as child gets near toy and softly as child moves away from toy.

Activity 2: Hum a tune to see if child can guess song. Next, see if child can match your pitch by humming a single note. Reverse activity and let child hum tune or note for you to guess or match.

Activity 3: Play a game of trying to describe the quality of different sounds you hear as loud, soft, high-pitched, in rhythm, squeaking, thumping, scraping, buzzing, banging, tooting, whining and as many more as you can think of.





Home Activity Card 7

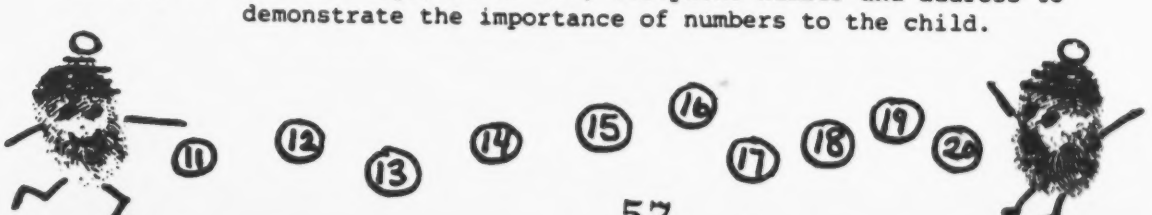
Concept: Reading Numerals

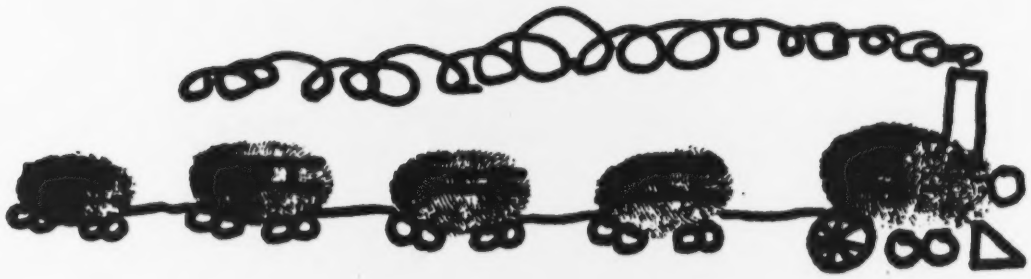
Activity 1: Use a deck of playing cards. Have child find the card numbers that match and pile together. Arrange the completed piles in numerical order.

Activity 2: Have child look through newspaper ads and name as many numerals as he/she can.

Activity 3: Have child look through the newspaper and find numbers 1 to 25. Cut out and paste these numbers in order on a sheet of paper.

Activity 4: Practice age, birthdate, telephone number and address to demonstrate the importance of numbers to the child.





Home Activity Card 8

Concept: Transportation

Activity 1: Have child cut pictures of various types of transportation from magazine. Then group the pictures as vehicles that travel in the air, on land and in the water.

Activity 2: Discuss which means of transportation moves the most and the least number of people at the same time.

Activity 3: Look for types of transportation that move various objects and see how many you can find as you drive in the car (as fuel, lumber, furniture, food etc.).

Home Activity Card 9

Concept: Ordinals (first, second, third, fourth, fifth)

Activity 1: Spend the afternoon doing things your child enjoys most. Ask him/her to tell you what activity you should do first, second and third.

Activity 2: When you go shopping, discuss the various positions that shoppers have in line by using concept words.

Activity 3: Play a game of lining up five household objects. Ask child to show you the third object, to place _____ second in line, to name each objects' position. Continue this activity by changing positions and then let child ask you similar questions.

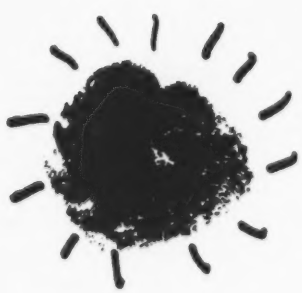
Home Activity Card 10

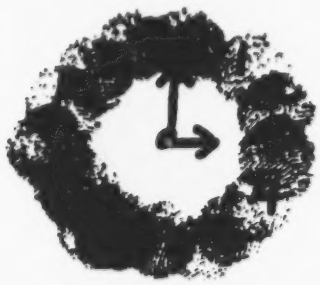
Concept: Measuring

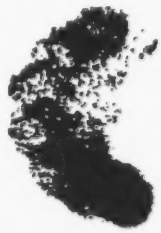
Activity 1: Look through your house and find all the objects that can be used for measuring (spoons, cups, scales, calendar, ruler, thermometer etc.). Discuss what they measure.

Activity 2: Give child empty measuring cup, quart and gallon containers. Ask child to find how many quarts of water the gallon container holds. Then find how many cups in a quart and how many cups in a gallon.

Activity 3: See if child can measure small objects in the house with a ruler or piece of cardboard. Object is to tell which is longer or shorter.







Home Activity Card 11

Concept: Time

Activity 1: Help your child make a clock out of cardboard. Discuss time by the hour and half-hour. Have child show you various times.

Activity 2: Discuss with child what he/she has done during the day. Stress the concepts of morning, noon, afternoon, night or evening and use clock to demonstrate time.

Activity 3: Give child a calendar. Help him/her keep a record of hot and cold days. Use words "today", "tomorrow" and "yesterday" when discussing the weather. Discuss the appropriate clothes to wear.

Home Activity Card 12

Concept: Letter Sounds and Names

Activity 1: Say a word as "bird". Ask child to say more words that begin with same sound. Use the following words to continue the game - sun, nut, hat, duck, wagon, money, top.

Activity 2: Print three letters (s, h, b) for your child. Ask him/her to point to word in book that begins with each letter. Child names letter and you read word. Continue game with more letters.

Activity 3: Ask child what word or sentence he/she would like to write. You print on paper and let child copy. A collection of words can be made that child can write and read.

Home Activity Card 13

Concept: Coin Value

Activity 1: Have child name the coins in your change when you go shopping.

Activity 2: Have child count 5 pennies to make a nickel, 10 pennies to make a dime and 25 pennies to make a quarter.

Activity 3: Let child find something he can buy for a penny, a nickel, a dime and a quarter. This will demonstrate the value of each coin.

Home Activity Card 14

Concept: Me, I'm Special

Activity 1: Discuss with child about all the traits or possessions that make him special. Then play a game and make lists of "What is special about me?" and "What is special about you?" Read lists aloud.

Activity 2: Practice using appropriate words in proper social context. This will give the child pleasure to observe warm responses from others when nice words are used. Examples: Please, Thank you, You're Welcome, Hello, Goodbye, I'm sorry, Excuse me, I had a nice time.

Activity 3: Have child do the following: 1) Make his friend smile. 2) Do something special for Mom or Dad. 3) Do a special job at home to help. 4) Do something special for teacher.

6 12 18

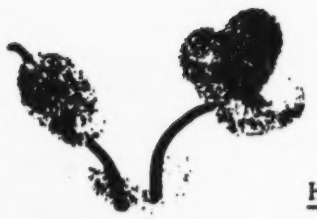
Home Activity Card 15

Concept: Auditory Memory

Activity 1: Tell or read a familiar story to child. Ask child to tell it back to you.

Activity 2: Call out a series of three numbers and ask child to repeat back in same order. You can also use color names or letters of alphabet. When child can easily repeat three items, increase to four and then five.

Activity 3: Teach child a new song, poem or nursery rhyme. Let him/her memorize it and repeat it to you.



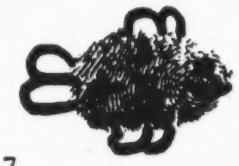
Home Activity Card 16

Concept: Plants

Activity 1: Visit a nursery and explore all the plants. Let child purchase a plant or seeds to grow. Obtain advice on how to care for purchase and let child assume responsibility.

Activity 2: Visit the produce section in your grocery store. Discuss the various parts of a plant that we eat. See if child can show you what are roots, stalks, leaves, stems, fruits and seeds.

Activity 3: Notice how various fruits and vegetables grow. You can use pictures or find the plants or trees in the local area. Examples: Some grow on plants, trees or vines. Some grow under the ground as potatoes.



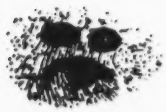
Home Activity Card 17

Concept: Adding Problems

Activity 1: Ask your child to give you four crayons and five rocks, then tell the total number of objects. Continue with different numbers and objects.

Activity 2: Make up adding stories as "Two birds were sitting on the fence and two more came. How many birds were on the fence?" Then see if child can make up stories.

Activity 3: Make 18 fish cutouts. Put paper clips on the mouths of each. Write addition facts 1-10 on sides. Attach a magnet to line on a pole. Child tells you number sum when a fish is caught.



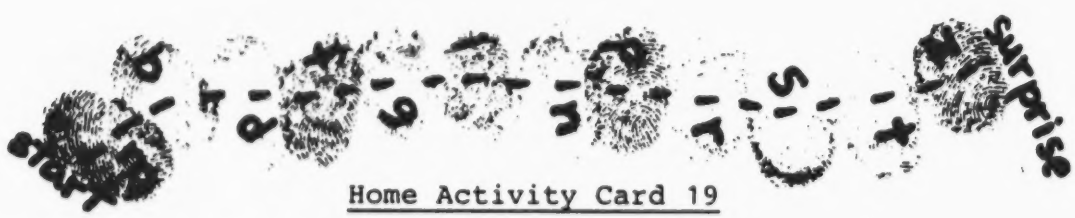
Home Activity Card 18

Concept: Safety

Activity 1: Inspect home with child and note if poisons or dangerous objects are out of reach.

Activity 2: Visit a fire station or talk with a police officer. Discuss what to do in case of an emergency such as fire, accidents or being lost.

Activity 3: Discuss importance of always telling you or caretaker where he/she is playing.



Home Activity Card 19

Concept: Final Consonant Letters

Activity 1: Say several words that rhyme along with one that does not. Ask child to identify the word that does not. Example: Sam, ham, hat, jam.

Activity 2: Play "I spy something that ends like the word red. What is it?" Child will guess answer. After object is correctly named, it is child's turn to say, "I spy . . ."

Activity 3: Play "road runner." Draw a highway on a sheet of paper and print the consonants b, d, f, g, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, z on it. Print "start" at beginning and "surprise" at the end. Your child must say a word ending with each consonant. Help may be needed at first. The surprise may be a snack or a favorite story.

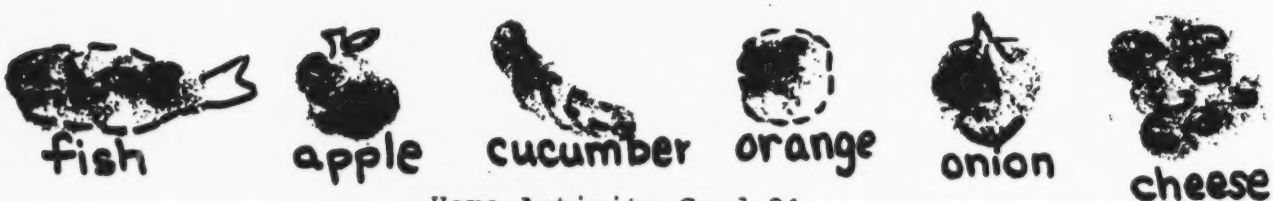
Home Activity Card 20

Concept: Following Directions

Activity 1: Tell child once to do a simple two step direction. Example: Pick up your toys and put them in their place.

Activity 2: Tell child once to do a more complex set of directions with four or five steps. Play a game and see how many directions child can accomplish. Example: Run to the door, open it, hop three times, close the door and come sit next to me.

Activity 3: Draw a map and see if child can follow map to a surprise. Example: Draw a map of yard and indicate number of steps to take, the directions to turn and objects to pass, etc.



Home Activity Card 21

Concept: Smelling and Tasting Food

Activity 1: Experiment by smelling foods. Blindfold child and see if the child can recognize food by the odor. Then group the foods as smelling pleasant or unpleasant.

Activity 2: Experiment by tasting foods that are sweet, sour, salty and bitter. Blindfold child and see if child can identify types of taste.

Activity 3: Use a simple recipe and let the child measure and mix with you. Talk, discuss and interact while you cook. This is a natural way to learn concepts in many areas. The child can smell, taste, feel and see, plus, have a final product. Instant pudding is always fun!

Home Activity Card 22

Concept: Rhyming Words

Activity 1: Say several words that rhyme along with one that does not. Ask child to identify word that does not. Examples: bat, cat, run, hat - ten, men, hen, log, - fan, boy, can, man - ball, sun, run, fun.

Activity 2: Read a nursery rhyme to child. Ask child to tell you the words that rhyme.

Activity 3: Say a word and see if child can name two more words that rhyme. Examples: man, ten, mop, pig, sun.

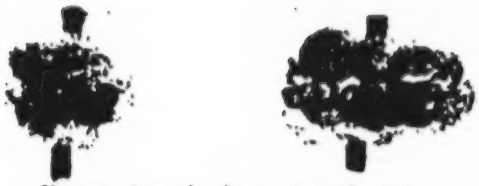
Home Activity Card 23

Concept: Logical Thinking

Activity 1: Help child learn to think and speak in complete sentences. Play a game where one person asks a question. The other person must answer with a complete thought. Example: "Is it sunny today?" "Yes, the sun is hot and I would like to go swimming."

Activity 2: Think of a process that requires a number of steps to complete. Ask child how do you plant a garden? grocery shop? make a sandwich? bake cookies? See if child can say steps in order.

Activity 3: Play game "I am thinking of _____." The child asks questions in an attempt to identify what you have in mind. Questions can be about color, size, shape, location or other helpful clues. Examples: "I am thinking of an insect." or "I am thinking of a thing that is square."



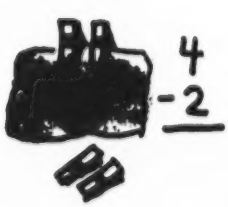
Home Activity Card 24

Concept: More Safety

Activity 1: Discuss importance of wearing seatbelt. Demonstrate and encourage its use.

Activity 2: Stress that some things are not for eating. Look around home and see if you can find not safe things. Examples: plants, cleaners, paint, pills or medicine (not supervised by an adult).

Activity 3: Look for signs in neighborhood that warn us. Examples: danger, keep out, exit, watch your step, keep off, stop.



Home Activity Card 25

Concept: Subtraction Problems

Activity 1: Give child twelve raisins. Tell child to eat six. Ask, "How many are left?" Continue with different numbers and objects.

Activity 2: Make up subtraction stories as "Five flowers were on a bush and mom picked two flowers. How many flowers are now on the bush?" See if child can make up stories.

Activity 3: Make a set of subtraction flashcards. Put them in a paper bag. Have child draw a card out of bag and give you the answer. Facts child does not know can be worked out by using clothespins on a piece of cardboard.

Home Activity Card 26

Concept: Animal Fun

Activity 1: Make a scrapbook of animals. Help child classify them in groups of insects, birds, fish, reptiles, mammals and amphibians.

Activity 2: Visit the zoo to observe and to discuss how animals are alike and different.

Activity 3: Let child care for an animal to develop responsibility and interest. This can be a pet or feeding and watching wild birds. Rolling a pine cone in peanut butter and then seeds makes a tempting treat to hang in backyard.

Home Activity Card 27

Concept: Summer Fun

Activity 1: Plan one outing each week as the beach, zoo, shopping center, lunch in a restaurant.

Activity 2: A weekly visit to the public library will stimulate reading. Let child use own library card and select books to enjoy at home.

Activity 3: Encourage child to help as much as possible in kitchen to measure, count, mix. This reinforces many number concepts plus cleaning-up develops responsibility.

Activity 4: Have child write a letter to someone who will write back.

Activity 5: Encourage child to play quiet board games or card games to develop thinking skills.

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO ENCOURAGE
PARENT COOPERATION,

December 8, 1985

Dear Parents,

These activities are planned to help your child progress in learning and thinking skills. Since the folder is my only indication that the activities are being reinforced at home, it is important that the folder is returned. Keep "Activity Cards" home for future use.

Return the bottom part of this note to indicate how the activities have been used.

Sincerely,

Nancy Varner

- -

We have been using the activities,_____

We will try to use future activities,_____

parent signature_____

APPENDIX H

RESULTS OF TEACHER SURVEY

Evaluation of Awareness Program
(N=4)

Results are based on the rating of the statements as follows:

Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Uncertain 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1

1.	Children have demonstrated more group participation.	4.5
2.	Children have demonstrated more self-expression in classroom participation.	5
3.	Children have improved in communication skills	4.5
4.	Children have improved in skills of grasping environmental concepts.	4.5
5.	Children have developed positive self-esteem in group participation.	4.5
6.	Parents demonstrated awareness and understanding of home activities.	3.6
7.	Parents consider the home activities have improved their children's learning awareness.	4.5
8.	Parents expressed approval of the home activities.	4.5
9.	The concept studied each week provided a sequential program for classroom use.	5
10.	The program was effective.	5
11.	The program should be implemented in succeeding years.	5

APPENDIX I

RESULTS OF PARENT SURVEY

Evaluation of Home Activity Cards
(N=17)

Results are based on the rating of the statements as follows:

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
5	4	3	2	1

1. The activity cards provided ways of working with child. 4
2. The activity cards were easily understood and can be used as a reference. 5
3. Child enjoyed activities. 5
4. The activities improved child's learning through pleasant experiences. 5
5. The concepts made me aware of subjects taught in classroom. 4
6. Program should be implemented in succeeding years. 5

Comments:

1. Terrific activities to use with youngsters.
2. Child was eager to get new activity each week.
3. Enjoyed activities!
4. We were provided with experiences in learning.
5. Good for child and me.
6. Saved cards to use this summer.
7. Well thought out activities.
8. Child liked activities because they were more like games.
9. Fun to do.
10. Enjoyed time together.
11. A great help!